DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 196 112 CS 503 229

AUTHOR Feldstein, Andrew P.; Craig, Robert T.
TITLE Linguistic Non-Immediacy: Effects of Attitude, Cognitive Orientation, and Boundary Conditions.
PUB DATE Nov 80
NOTE 37p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Speech Communication Association (66th, New York, NY, November 13-16, 1980).

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Attitudes; College Students; *Communication Research; Higher Education; *Interpersonal Relationship; *Language Styles; Speech Communication

ABSTRACT

Antecedents of linguistic nonimmediacy were examined in a four-factor analysis of covariance with repeated measures design. Immediacy refers to the language of a message expressing a close relationship to the referent, while nonimmediacy suggests that the language expresses a more distant relationship. Subjects in the study were 118 college students who wrote brief messages in response to hypothetical situations. Receiver status (peer/authority) and receiver attitude (positive/negative) were varied between subjects, while controversiality and importance of the referent were varied (each high/low) within subjects. Cognitive orientation and attitude toward referent were covariates. Cognitive orientation related positively to nonimmediacy. Attitude related negatively to nonimmediacy only when controversiality was controlled. An interaction was found involving all four independent variables. For all four sources, messages about less controversial referents were more nonimmediate than messages about more controversial referents when the referent was high in importance. When the referent was low in importance, the relationship between controversiality and nonimmediacy tended to disappear or reverse. Only for the peer-negative attitude receiver, however, was there a significant positive relationship between controversiality and nonimmediacy when the referent was low in importance. (Author/RL)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED196112

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH,
EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

Linguistic Non-immediacy: Effects of Attitude, Cognitive Orientation, and Boundary Conditions

Andrew P. Feldstein
425 Riverside Drive, 15E
New York, NY 10025

Robert T. Craig
Department of Communication and Theatre
University of Illinois at Chicago Circle
Chicago, Illinois 60680

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Andrew P. Feldstein

Robert T. Craig

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Presented to Language and Speech Sciences Division, Speech Communication Association, New York, November 15, 1980.

CS583229

"Linguistic Non-immediacy: Effects of Attitude, Cognitive Orientation, and Boundary Conditions"

Non-immediacy in verbal messages is "the degree of directness and intensity of interaction between a communicator and the object of his communication" (Mehrabian, 1967a, p. 414). Non-immediacy is a type of language variation through which a communicator expresses his/her relationship to the referents of communication. A source is being "immediate" if the language of the message expresses a close relationship to the referent and is being "non-immediate" if the language expresses a more distant relationship to the referent. To borrow an example from Bradac, Bowers, and Courtright (1979), the statement "We certainly will enjoy the party" is much more immediate than the statement "I think you must enjoy the beef wellington at that party with me" because it expresses a closer relationship to the objects mentioned.

Non-immediate language has been shown to affect receiver judgments of the source's attitudes, competence, character, and similarity to the receiver (Bradac, Bowers, & Courtright, 1979). The present study concerns not these attributional consequences of non-immediacy but rather antecedent factors that influence a source's use of non-immediate language. Early studies (Wiener & Mehrabian, 1968) linked non-immediacy to the expression of negative attitudes. As research on the question of antecedents has accumulated, however, increasingly complex relationships have become apparent. Continuing this line of development, the present study indicates complex interactions among a number of antecedents of non-immediacy.

Linguistic Non-immediacy

The concept of linguistic non-immediacy evolved from the belief that more than one message could be transmitted through a single encoded response. Rachner (1975) proposed that at least two separate messages are functioning in any verbal assertion: an expression of a fact (the "phrastic" message) and an expression of the speaker's attitude towards that fact (the "neustic" message). Scholars have linked non-immediacy to the neustic aspect of the message, hypothesizing that the greater the degree of non-immediacy in an utterance the more negative is the communicator's attitude toward the referent of communication.

Wiener and Mehrabian (1968) review the early research on non-immediacy, which generally supports the hypothesis that non-immediacy reflects negativeness of attitude. Two basic types of experiments were performed in these early studies. The first type involved having subjects differentiate between pairs of sentences differing in non-immediacy. It was found that both trained and untrained observers were able to perceive that the more non-immediate sentences expressed more negative attitudes (Mehrabian, 1966, 1967a).

The other type of experiment involved subjects themselves writing statements which the experimenters predicted would be more or less immediate. In one study the experimenters placed subjects into failure-oriented tasks, which they expected to produce negative feelings, and success-oriented tasks, which they expected to produce positive feelings. As predicted, subjects' statements about the failure-oriented tasks were more non-immediate. In other experiments subjects were asked to write a sentence or two about themselves and people they either liked or disliked. In these

cases statements about a disliked person were more non-immediate than statements about a liked person (Mehrabian & Wiener, 1966).

Pease (1972) identified some flaws in the design of Mehrabian's paired sentence experiments. One problem was that Pease did not judge the pairs of sentences to be factually equivalent. If this were so, then subjects were detecting more than non-immediate variations as they judged the pairs of sentences. Another problem, according to Pease, was that Mehrabian directly contrasted the sentences. The artificial contrast could have heightened the contrast between the sentences. Pease modified the sentences in order to overcome the first problem, and constructed three experimental conditions, in only one of which pairs of sentences were directly contrasted. One interesting result of this study was that non-immediate statements were judged as "less positive" rather than "negative" as compared to immediate statements. Pease concluded that non-immediacy may indicate indifference rather than negativeness of attitude. This result appears to conflict with those of Mehrabian (1967b).

Wagner and Pease (1976) report further experiments in which the subjects encoded messages. These studies created situations in which people had to make statements that were inconsistent with their own views, or where they knew they would meet with some conflict. In such situations, it was thought, "the linguistic form that the statement takes will be such that the communicator partially disassociated himself from the statement" (Wagner & Pease, 1976, p.1). In one experiment subjects were asked to write positive statements about people they disliked or negative statements about people they liked, or they made statements consistent with their feelings. In contrast to similar studies reported by Wiener and Mehrabian (1968)

Wagner and Pease (1976) hypothesized that positive statements concerning disliked people, rather than negative statements in general, would be the most non-immediate. The results, which supported the hypothesis, show that factors other than attitude (in this case, conflict between attitude and message), influence non-immediacy. Conville (1974) found a relationship between non-immediacy and yet another antecedent, communicator anxiety.

Feinberg (1971) found that statements that subjects wrote about themselves and a disabled person were more non-immediate than statements about themselves and a non-disabled person. This result suggests another factor, cultural constraints on expression, that interacts with attitude to influence non-immediacy. Negative attitudes toward the disabled may be expressed through the use of non-immediate language because cultural restrictions prohibit the overt expression of such attitudes. It may be that non-immediacy is a better indicator of attitude in situations in which the overt expression of attitude is restricted.

In sum, although a link between non-immediacy and attitude has been demonstrated in a number of contexts (see also Anthony, 1974; Conville, 1975; Hess & Gossett, 1974), it is clear that other factors affect non-immediacy either independently or in interaction with attitude. The present research is an attempt to systematize several of those factors.

Boundary Conditions

For Wiener and Mehrabian (196[illegible] linguistic non-immediacy is interpretable as indicating an individual's attitude only to the extent to which the language behavior varies from the "boundary conditions" which constrain it. Boundary conditions "are all the external-contextual as well as grammatical or other implicit

communication rules which specify the finite number of possible messages in a situation" (Wiener & Mehrabian, 1968, p. 12). Boundary conditions, then, are culturally derived constraints that limit the number of possible reactions to a situation. Behavior consistent with the boundary conditions yields no information about individual variations. For example, use of the past tense to describe an event which occurred in the past is consistent with boundary conditions imposed by grammar. Use of the past tense to describe a present situation, however, is linguistically anomalous and may be interpreted as a non-immediate language variation. The construction and interpretation of a scoring procedure for linguistic non-immediacy therefore depends on an understanding of relevant boundary conditions. Feinberg's (1971) findings that statements about a disabled person were more non-immediate illustrates the ambiguity of interpretation that can arise from an imperfect specification of boundary conditions. In that study, cultural prejudice about the disabled seems to interact with constraints on the expression of those attitudes. A systematic study of non-immediacy must be based on an analysis of boundary conditions.

Behavior that varies from boundary conditions indicates individual differences, but here too there are sources of ambiguity. An individual's attitude toward an object may be a good summary indication of the individual's experiences with the object; linguistic non-immediacy, in turn, may indicate the person's attitude. But non-immediacy may be influenced both directly and indirectly by other traits as well. Some of those traits may interact with each other and with boundary conditions.

Notably, all boundary conditions must, in order to have any influence upon an individual, exist not only in the world but in the individual. In other words, a boundary condition can only have the potential to affect a person's behavior if the person consciously or unconsciously acknowledges or is sensitive to the condition. In this light it will be necessary to deal with boundary conditions in terms of the individual's belief system.

Cognitive Orientation

The concept of "cognitive orientation" (Kreitler & Kreitler, 1976) offers a way to measure sensitivity to boundary conditions as a function of the individual's belief system. The Kreitlers define a person's cognitive orientation toward a particular referent in terms of the beliefs the person holds with regard to the referent. They hypothesize that once the cognitive orientation is ascertained the person's behavior can be predicted. According to the Kreitlers, in order to predict behavior four belief types must be measured. Beliefs about goals are those by which a person links the self with something desired (e.g., "I want to feel able to speak freely with my friends"). Beliefs about norms and rules link the referent to norms of behavior (e.g., "People should be able to speak freely with their friends"). Beliefs about self "express information about oneself or any aspect of self--one's habits, actions, abilities, feelings, sensations" (Kreitler & Kreitler, 1976, pp. 90-91). An example might be "I am not able to speak freely with my friends." General beliefs express factual relationships among events or situations in the world (e.g., "People don't usually speak freely with their friends").

Cognitive orientation is measured by constructing an instru-

ment designed according to specifications developed by Kreitler and Kreitler (1976) to ascertain beliefs of the four types relevant to a specific referent. The cognitive orientation score predicts behavior by tapping beliefs which make the individual more or less sensitive to the conditions that are projected to influence the specific type of behavior.

Antecedents of Linguistic Non-immediacy

Based on an analysis of previous research, six potential influences on measured linguistic non-immediacy were chosed for exploration in this study. Two of those variables are individual difference factors: attitude toward the referent of communication and cognitive orientation. The other four variables were considered to be potential boundary conditions: status of the receiver, attitude of the receiver toward the referent, the controversiality of the referent, and the importance of the referent.

The rationale for examining cognitive orientation was discussed earlier. Source attitude toward the referent, of course, has been the main focus of previous research on non-immediacy. The four potential boundary conditions require some explanation.

A study reported by Wiener and Mehrabian (1968, p. 131) dealt with varying responses to peers and authority figures. There was some evidence that the status of the addressee influenced the degree of non-immediacy in responses, but the direction of influence appeared to depend upon knowledge of specific peers and authority figures. In the present study authority figure identities were left in a more abstract form and it was assumed that more stereotypical distinctions would emerge.

Given that non-immediacy is used as a basis for attributing attitudes, a source may manipulate the non-immediacy of a message

in the course of adapting the message to the receiver. Thus receiver attitude may function as a boundary condition affecting non-immediacy.

The controversiality and importance of the referent are suggested as possible boundary conditions by a number of considerations. The more controversial the referent the more likely that a message about it will meet with disagreement, and the more important the referent, the greater the risks asociated with any conflict, whether between message and self-image of the source, message and receiver attitude, or self-image of the source and receiver attributions about the source. Thus, under conditions of high controversiality or high importance, the need to be consistent (Wagner & Pease, 1976), the need to produce a socially acceptable response to a disvalued object (Feinberg, 1971), or responses to success and failure (Mehrabian & Wiener, 1967), to cite several examples, might be enhanced.

The purpose of the experiment to be reported was to explore the effects of these hypothesized antecedents of linguistic non-immediacy in a design that would permit the description of their probable interactions.

Methods

In the main experiment, subjects (118 undergraduates in communication courses) wrote brief messages in response to hypothetical situations in which the hypothesized boundary conditions were varied. The design was a four-factor analysis of covariance with repeated measures. Each subject encoded four messages, one for each of the four combinations of high or low controversiality with high or low importance of the referent. All four messages were directed to the same receiver. Each subject was

assigned to one of four receivers representing the possible combinations of high or low status with favorable or unfavorable attitude toward the referent (the source was either positive or negative toward all four referents). Thus there were two between-subjects factors (status of receiver and attitude of receiver), and two within-subjects factors (controversiality and importance of the referent), which generated four non-immediacy scores for each subject. Cognitive orientation and source attitude toward the referent were measured and treated as covariates. The study also included a control group to assess reactive effects of the cognitive orientation questionnaire and attitude scale.

The overall study consisted of three phases. In the first phase referents were pretested and selected, response situations were devised, and the cognitive orientation questionnaire was developed. Phase two was the main experiment. Subjects were asked to (a) complete the cognitive orientation questionnaire, (b) respond to attitude scales, and (c) write messages for a set of four response situations. The third phase involved scoring of the messages for non-immediacy. Each response was scored by two trained judges whose results were averaged to produce the final score.

Development of Materials

Referents. Forty-seven subjects who did not participate in the main experiment were asked to indicate on rating scales, for each of nineteen potential referents, the amount of disagreement the item would generate and how important it would be for them to maintain their own position in that disagreement. On the basis of these responses, the best referents were selected to represent the four combinations of controversiality and importance. The four

referents were: peanut butter (low controversiality/low importance), Christmas (low controversiality/high importance), Philadelphia (high controversiality/low importance), and cigarettes (high controversiality/high importance). Generally speaking, the selected referents were not rated at the extreme ends of the scales of controversiality and importance but were moderately polarized in the appropriate directions.

Cognitive Orientation Questionnaire. The initial version of the cognitive orientation questionnaire consisted of 47 items that had been generated to represent beliefs about relevant boundary conditions. These included beliefs about self expression ("I try to consider who I am talking to when I express my feelings"), others' rights to expression ("People should always have the right to express their own views"), behavior towards friends ("People go out of their way to be liked by their friends"), behavior towards authority figures ("When I express my feelings I'm more concerned about my friends' reactions, than the reactions of those in authority"), and social versus moral obligations ("I want to be able to stand up and make my views known, no matter what the consequences"). Some items were adapted from Crowne and Marlow's (1964) social desirability scale. All items were constructed so that a particular condition or concept was represented in each of the four belief types. For example, "When establishing friendships, people should, above all, strive to be liked" (norm belief); "Being liked is the most important part of friendship" (general belief); "When establishing friendships, I try above all to be liked" (belief about self); "I'd like to make more of an effort to be liked by my friends" (goal belief). Because of excessive redundancy or failure to meet reliability criteria, not all expressions of each concept were included in the

final questionnaire.

The questionnaire consisted of four sections representing the belief types. The questions elicited dichotomous true/false or agree/disagree responses and could therefore be scored either 1 = sensitivity to a relevant boundary condition or 0 = lack of sensitivity. The items were summed to give a cognitive orientation score that was assumed to represent overall sensitivity to relevant boundary conditions and thus to predict greater non-immediacy of communication.

The 47 item questionnaire was administered to a separate sample of seventy-one students and the results subjected to item analysis. Point biserial correlations for the items ranged from .06 to .54. Items with either point biserial correlations of less than .26 or poor discrimination were either deleted (seven items) or modified (seven items). Thus the final cognitive orientation questionnaire consisted of 40 items, ten in each of the four parts. In the main experiment the questionnaire was tested for reliability using a split half procedure and the Spearman Brown formula (r=.457).

Main Experiment

In the main experiment 118 subjects consented to participate in a study described only as involving the answering of a number of questions. An experimental packet distributed to 98 subjects included: consent form, instructions and cognitive orientation questionnaire, attitude scales, and four hypothetical situations requiring the subject to write messages. Twenty subjects composing the control group received only the consent form and a set of four response situations.

The attitude scales were one-item semantic differential-type rating scales (good-bad), one for each of the four referents (peanut

butter, Philadelphia, cigarettes, Christmas).

The response situations were brief hypothetical descriptions giving information about a receiver's status (described as either "a professor" or "your friend") and the receiver's attitude toward the referent (positive or negative). Here, for example, are the instructions given in the friend-positive condition for the referent peanut butter:

> You are eating lunch with your friend and you notice that (s)he is eating a peanut butter sandwich and enjoying it. (S)he notices your interest and asks you what you think of peanut butter.
>
> Please write a statement about your self and this item. Please include "I" and the name of the item somewhere in your answer.

Each subject responded to all four referents for one of the four receiver status/attitude situations.

Scoring Non-immediacy

Each message was scored for non-immediacy by two judges whose scores were averaged to give a final score. The judges were trained to score each response for the number of "non-immediate indicators" contained in each independent clause ("scorable unit"). The non-immediacy score was obtained by dividing the total number of indicators by the number of scorable units. The non-immediate indicators scored included the following: spatial (use of demonstrative pronouns such as "that" or "those" to refer to the referent); temporal (the relationship between the communicator and referent is displaced in time); passivity (the relationship between communicator and referent is imposed on either or both of them); unilaterality (the relationship between communicator and referent is not mutually

determined: "I am dancing with X" versus "X and I are dancing"); possibility (the relationship between communicator and referent is possible rather than actual); part (communicator) (only a part, aspect or characteristic of the communicator is involved: "My thoughts are about X"); part (object) (only a part, aspect or characteristic of the referent is involved: "I am concerned about X's future"); class (communicator) (a group of people which includes the communicator is involved in the relationship: "X came to visit us"); class (object) (the relationship involves a class of objects which includes the referent: "I visited X and his wife")(Mehrabian & Wiener, 1966).

Coding reliability was assessed by means of a Pearson product-moment correlation (r=.58). This is lower than the reliability of .73 reported by Wagner and Pease (1976). The difference may be accounted for by the fact that judges in the present study had to identify both scorable units and non-immediate indicators, whereas Wagner and Pease divided the responses into units before scoring.

Data Analysis

Statistical analysis was done by means of the Biomed P-Series Program 2V for Analysis of Variance and Covariance Including Repeated Measures (Dixon & Brown, 1979). Alpha = .05 was used as the criterion of statistical significance.

Results

No significant difference between mean non-immediacy scores of the experimental groups and the control group was observed. Thus, the cognitive orientation and attitude scales appear not to have produced large reactive effects.

Results of the four-factor analysis of covariance with repeated

measures are displayed in Table 1. The first panel of the table

(Table 1 about here)

includes tests based on non-immediacy scores pooled within the four receiver conditions. No effects of receiver type appear, but there are significant effects of cognitive orientation (the first covariate) and for the combined covariates. Since source attitudes (the second covariate) are pooled for the four referents in this analysis, thus greatly reducing the variation of source attitude, the significant effect of the combined covariates is primarily due to variation in cognitive orientation. Cognitive orientation is positively related to non-immediacy (pooled regression coefficient = .028), indicating that the greater the cognitive orientation the more non-immediate the subject's messages. No significant effects occur in the second panel. In the third panel there is a significant main effect of controversiality and a significant relationship between non-immediacy and the second covariate, source attitude. In this analysis, source attitude is pooled within levels of controversiality for each source. The fourth panel shows a significant two-way interaction between importance and controversiality of the referent, and a four-way interaction involving all four independent variables.

Discussion

Effects of Covariates

Cognitive Orientation. The cognitive orientation questionnaire was designed to determine how a subject's sensitivity toward boundary conditions would affect linguistic non-immediacy. A positive relationship was found between cognitive orientation and non-immediacy.

Table 2 illustrates this relationship more clearly by showing the mean non-immediacy scores within each experimental condition of subjects with cognitive orientation scores above and below the mean. Although the magnitude of the difference varies, the general pattern is highly consistent.

(Table 2 about here)

The relationship between cognitive orientation and the boundary conditions is further illustrated by Figure 1. Figure 1 displays

(Figure 1 about here)

graphs of non-immediacy for subjects scoring above and below the mean of cognitive orientation, plotted for (a) each receiver type, and (b) each referent. While the relationship between cognitive orientation and non-immediacy is consistent, the variations in response to different receivers and referents demand closer examination. It seems that people with high cognitive orientation are about equally sensitive to differences in referent and receiver, whereas people with low cognitive orientation are more sensitive to variations in referent than to variations in receiver. Thus it appears that low cognitive orientation is associated primarily with lower sensitivity to differences among receivers. The plotted lines in (b) are nearly parallel, whereas the lines in (a) are quite dissimilar. Cognitive orientation, then, appears to affect the influence of receiver boundary conditions but not referent boundary conditions.

Measurement of cognitive orientation enables us to identify two populations, one of which is responsive to both receiver and referend conditions, while the other is responsive only to referent conditions. This may help to explain the results obtained with regard

to the four independent variables. Both populations were similarly influenced by the controversiality and importance of referents, and there was a significant interaction effect for those two factors. Since only one of the two cognitive orientation populations (high scorers) was responsive to receiver status and attitude it is not surprising that those two factors did not produce a significant interaction in the combined cognitive orientation groups.

Source attitude. The second covariate, source attitude toward the referent, also relates to non-immediacy, but in a more complex manner. Since there are four referents, each subject has four different attitudes that the analysis must take into account. In the first panel of Table 1 the scores for source attitude are averaged across referents. In other words, for each subject the four scores are averaged to make a single score which is then related to the average of the four non-immediacy scores. Treated in this way, source attitude does not significantly predict non-immediacy.

In the other panels, source attitude is not averaged across all four referents but is combined in terms of the independent variables considered in each panel. In two of these three analyses source attitude does not significantly correlate with non-immediacy; in the remaining panel a highly significant negative relationship appears (pooled regression coefficient = -.213). In this panel attitudes toward high and low importance referents are averaged within each level of controversiality.

In this study, then, the relationship between source attitude and linguistic non-immediacy expected on the basis of previous research was observed only in terms of a particular configuration of the independent variables. Non-immediacy was associated with

more negative attitude toward the referent only when attitude and non-immediacy scores were averaged between importance levels within levels of controversiality. In other words, controversiality had to be controlled in order for the relationship to become apparent.

Four-Way Interaction

A most important finding of this experiment is the four-way interaction effect of receiver status, receiver attitude, controversiality, and importance of the referent. As was expected on the basis of our analysis of previous research, the boundary conditions affecting non-immediacy operate as a system and cannot be considered separately without engendering conceptual confusion. The nature of the four-way interaction is clarified by the graphs in Figure 2.

(Figure 2 about here)

In Figure 2 the adjusted cell means of non-immediacy are plotted as a function of importance and controversiality for each of the four receivers. The effects of both importance and controversiality are readily apparent in these graphs. Four all four sources, messages about low controversiality referents are more non-immediate than messages about high controversiality referents when the referent is high in importance. When the referent is low in importance, there is a tendency for the relationship between controversiality and non-immediacy to disappear or even reverse such that the more controversial referent produces more non-immediacy (this two-way interaction is discussed below). The reversal of relationship, however, is significant only when the source is a friend whose attitude toward the referent is negative. Only in this case does the more controversial referent produce significantly more non-immediacy

when the referent is low in importance. Because the overall pattern of the importance-controversiality interaction is broken in the friend-negative condition, receiver status and attitude need to be considered in conjunction with importance and controversiality, thus generating the four-way interaction.

Any attempt to interpret this relationship theoretically must proceed cautiously and may indeed be premature. The greater immediacy of messages about the high importance-high controversiality referent regardless of receiver may reflect a tendency for communicators to be less cautious or controlled in speaking about a highly involving topic. When the referent is of less importance, the communicator may be more cautious in speaking about a highly controversial topic, expecially when the receiver is a friend whose negative opinion of the referent might render discussion of the subject more risky. Whatever the actual meaning of the results, which might conceivably have been produced by uncontrolled aspects of the four referents other than controversiality and importance, it is clear that the influence of boundary conditions on linguistic non-immediacy is complex, and that the complexities of the relationship require further study.

Two-Way Interaction

There is a highly significant two-way interaction effect between involvement and controversiality. This can be seen clearly in Figure 1, in all four graphs. The strength of this interaction suggests that, despite the four-way effect just discussed, the interaction of these two factors is an important influence on non-immediacy. It is interesting to note that these two factors relate to referents subjects are communicating about whereas the other two factors,

status and receiver attitude, are tied to the situation rather than the referent. It is, of course, premature to draw any conclusions from this grouping of factors other than to say that in this study the referent factors might have had more reality for subjects than did the contrived situations to which the subjects responded.

Controversiality

Of the four boundary conditions, only controversiality had a significant main effect on non-immediacy. Contrary to what would be expected on the basis of previous research, high controversiality is associated with lower non-immediacy than is low controversiality. Since controversiality also participates in interaction effects, however, this result is probably not theoretically meaningful. Figure 2 indicates that increased controversiality increases non-immediacy only when the referent is low in importance.

Limitations and Implications

There is a large gap in complexity between the present experiment and previous research, none of which had been designed to detect complex interactions among antecedents of linguistic non-immediacy. Consequently, the complexity of the findings has run ahead of the development of conceptual equipment needed to account for them. Early research was based on the premise that linguistic non-immediacy represents a deviation from boundary conditions that is reflective primarily of source attitude. The ambiguities of previous research, we suggested, may have resulted from failure to specify fully the boundary conditions in terms of which non-immediacy as an indicator of attitude would have to be defined. We expected, then, to find interactions among the hypothesized boundary conditions, and we did find interactions. In fact, the influence of source attitude was

largely overshadowed by the interactive effects of the hypothesized boundary conditions and by cognitive orientation, which was conceived of as sensitivity to boundary conditions. The results imply that non-immediacy must be reconceptualized as the product of a complex of situational and predispositional factors. This study has not so much loosened that tangle as it has suggested the dimensions of the task. A series of more narrowly delimited studies may be necessary in order to sort out the relationships more clearly.

Another important limitation of this study, especially in view of the four-way interaction effect, is that only one referent of each type was used. The data do not at all rule out the possibility that the interaction resulted from cognitive aspects of the four referents other than controversiality and importance. Thus it is important that the finding be replicated using different referents.

A third limitation relates to the use of short written descriptions as representations of social situations. Future studies might attempt to achieve greater realism, for example by having subjects interact with confederates and recording their spoken messages. The idea of recording spoken messages also raises the possibility of including non-verbal behavior in the measurement of non-immediacy (Mehrabian, 1971). The trade-offs for this greater realism of the communication situation would be in terms of increased costs and difficulty of controlling extraneous variables.

The cognitive orientation questionnaire proved to be very useful in this investigation. The questionnaire might be modified to include the subject's sensitivity to other variables. Another very important consideration with regard to cognitive orientation involves the question of whether non-immediacy represents attitude as much as

it does varying sensitivity to the situation in which the attitude is being expressed. This question points again to the importance of examining non-immediacy in more carefully controlled contexts. A simple relationship between attitude and non-immediacy has not emerged again since the earliest and simplest studies. What has emerged is a series of complex interaction effects. With each successive step the potential of non-immediacy as a means of attitude measurement has become more obscure. Research into the above-mentioned areas could serve to better clarify the meaning of the interaction effects found in the study, and whether non-immediate language variations will ultimately be useable as indicators of attitude.

On another level, regardless of the ultimate verdict on the relationship between non-immediate language behavior and attitude, the concept of linguistic non-immediacy remains potentially valuable. Some early studies produced evidence that non-immediate variations in language could be detected by untrained judges (Mehrabian, 1967a). If this is true, then even a limited knowledge of the concept may produce awareness of these variations in day-to-day encounters. Looking at non-immediacy from this perspective broadens its relevance. Questions arise concerning the potential applications of a communicator's awareness of non-immediacy in a variety of everyday communication situations.

References

Anthony, S. Immediacy and nonimmediacy: Factors in communicating interpersonal attraction. Journal of Social Psychology, 1971, 84, 135-140.

Bradac, James J., Bowers, John Waite, & Courtright, John A. Three language variables in communication research: Intensity, immediacy, and diversity. Human Communication Research, 1979, 5, 257-269.

Conville, R. Linguistic nonimmediacy and communicators' anxiety. Psychological Reports, 1974, 35, 1107-1114.

Conville, R. L. Linguistic nonimmediacy and attribution of communicator's attitudes. Psychological Reports, 1975, 36, 951-957.

Crowne, D. & Marlow, D. The approval motive. New York: Wiley, 1964.

Dixon, W.J. & Brown, M.B. (Eds.) BMDP-79: Biomedical computer programs, P-series. Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1979, pp. 540-580.

Feinberg, L. Nonimmediacy in verbal communication as an indicator of attitudes toward the disabled. Journal of Social Psychology, 1971, 84, 135-140.

Hess, A. K. & Gossett, D. Nixon and the media: A study of nonimmediacy in newspaper editorials as reflective of geographical attitude differences. Psychological Reports, 1974, 34, 1055-1058.

Kreitler, H. & Kreitler, S. Cognitive orientation and behavior. New York: Springer Press, 1976.

Mehrabian, A. Immediacy: An indicator of attitude in linguistic communication. Journal of Personality, 1966, 34, 26-34.

Mehrabian, A. Attitudes inferred from neutral verbal communications. Journal of Consulting Psychology, 1967, 31, 414-417. (a)

Mehrabian, A. Attitudes inferred from non-immediacy of verbal communications. Journal of Verbal Learning and Verbal Behavior, 1967, 6, 294-295. (b)

Mehrabian, A. Silent messages. Belmont, Calif.: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1971.

Mehrabian, A. & Wiener, M. Decoding of inconsistent communications. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 1967, 6, 109-114.

Pease, K. Attitudes in linguistic communication: A further study of immediacy. Journal of Personality, 1972, 40, 298-307.

Rachner, Jane. Moral status of factual utterances. Journal of Critical Analysis, 1975, , 121-125.

Wag er, H. & Pease, K. The verbal communication of inconsistency between attitudes held and attitudes expressed. Journal of Personality, 1976, 44, 1-15.

Wiener, M. & Mehrabian, A. Language within language: Immediacy, a channel in verbal communication. New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1968.

Table 1

Analysis of Covariance Table Generated Through Biomed P-2V Program

Source	Sum of Squares	Degrees of Freedom	Mean Square	F	Prob. F Exceeded
Mean	10.63174		10.63174	17.28133	0.000*
Receiver status	0.93161	1	0.93161	1.51428	0.222
Receiver attitude	1.14030	1	1.14030	1.85350	0.177
Status/attitude	0.11465	1	0.11465	0.18636	0.667
CO score (COVA 1)	4.03057	1	4.03057	6.55149	0.012*
Source attitude (COVA 2)	0.76378	1	0.76378	1.24148	0.268
All COVA	4.92726	2	2.46363	4.00450	0.022*
Error	56.59981	92	0.61522		
Involvement	0.45215	1	0.45215	1.07832	0.302
Involvement/status	0.29449	1	0.29449	0.70233	0.404
Involvement/attitude	0.16698	1	0.16698	0.39822	0.580
Involvement/status/attitude	0.11884	1	0.11884	0.28341	0.596
Source attitude (COVA)	0.03475	1	0.03475	0.08286	0.774
Error	38.99576	93	0.41931		
Controversiality	2.51602	1	2.51602	6.32767	0.014*
Controversy/status	0.44499	1	0.44499	1.11913	0.293
Controversy/attitude	0.15068	1	0.15068	0.37895	0.540
Controversy/status/attitude	0.38940	1	0.38940	0.97933	0.325
Source attitude (COVA)	4.21666	1	4.21666	10.60468	0.002**
Error	36.97888	93	0.39762		

Table 1

(continued)

Source	Sum of Squares	Degrees of Freedom	Mean Square	F	Prob. F Exceeded
Involvement/controversy	5.12572	1	5.12572	11.74309	0.001**
Involvement/controversy/status	0.35085	1	0.35085	0.80379	0.372
Involvement/controversy/attitude	0.00005	1	0.00005	0.00010	0.992
Involvement/controversy/status attitude	1.75073	1	1.75073	4.01095	0.048*
Source attitude (COVA 2)	0.31059	1	0.31059	0.71158	0.401
Error	40.59338	93	0.43649		

*P < .05.

**P < .01.

Table 2

Non-Immediacy Scores for Those With High vs. Low CO Scores Across All Conditions and Items

Item	Condition				
	Friend/ positive	Friend/ negative	Professor/ positive	Professor/ Negative	All
Peanut butter (low involvement/ low controversiality)					
High CO score	2.14	1.45	2.02	1.81	1.82
Low CO score	1.58	1.41	1.61	1.94	1.65
Philadelphia (low involvement/ high controversiality)					
High CO score	2.34	2.17	2.43	2.09	2.25
Low CO score	1.67	2.12	1.98	1.85	1.88
Christmas (high involvement/ low controversiality)					
High CO score	2.02	2.09	2.44	2.32	2.24
Low CO score	2.19	2.03	2.02	1.72	2.01
Cigarettes (high involvement/ high controversiality)					
High CO score	1.96	1.81	2.14	2.03	1.99
Low CO score	1.76	1.78	1.77	1.63	1.74

Table 2

(continued)

Item	Condition				
	Friend/ positive	Friend/ negative	Professor/ positive	Professor/ negative	All
All items					
High CO score	2.12	1.88	2.22	2.02	2.05
Low CO score	1.80	1.84	1.86	1.78	1.82

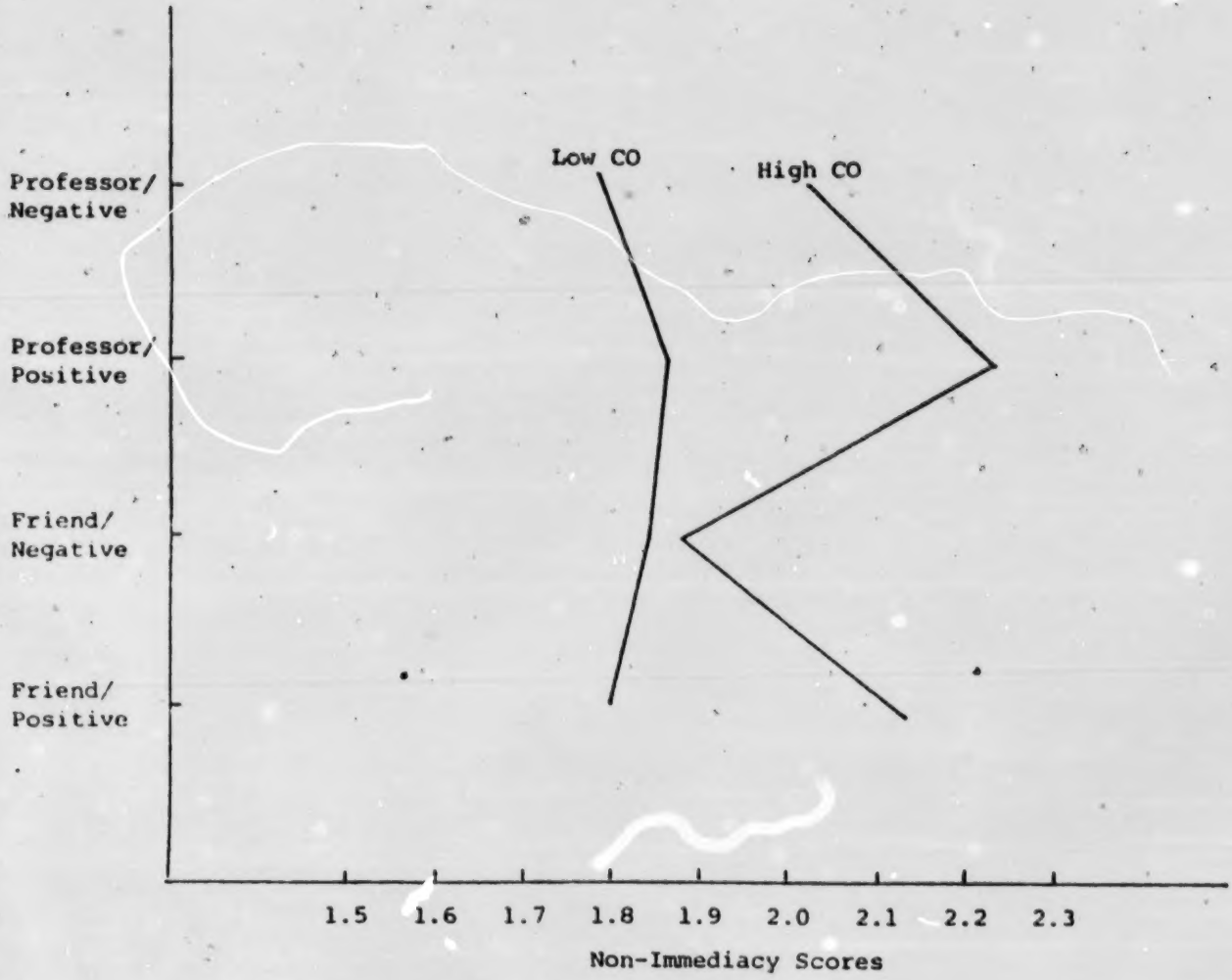


Figure 1a. The Difference in Non-Immediacy Scores Between High and Low CO Scores in Situations

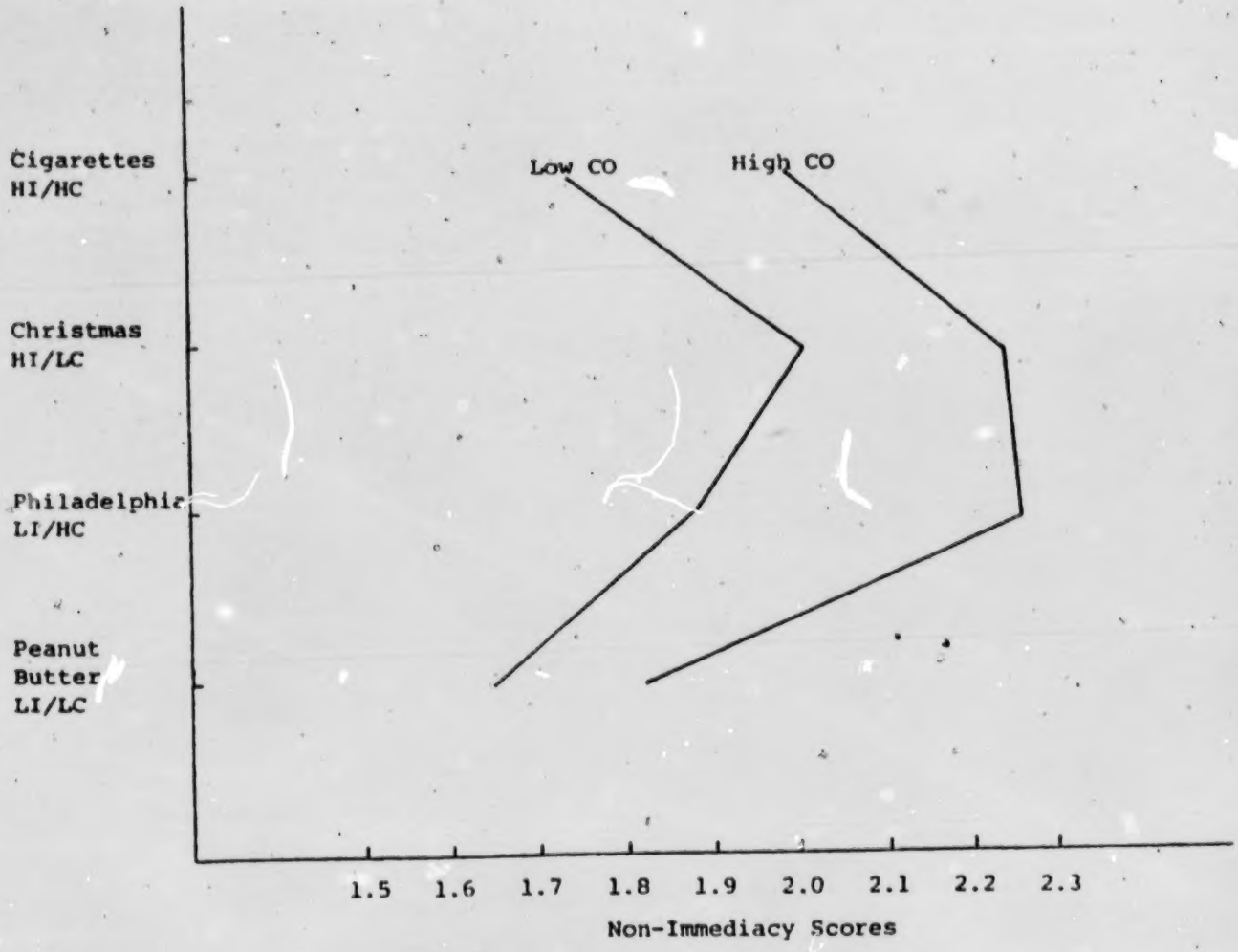
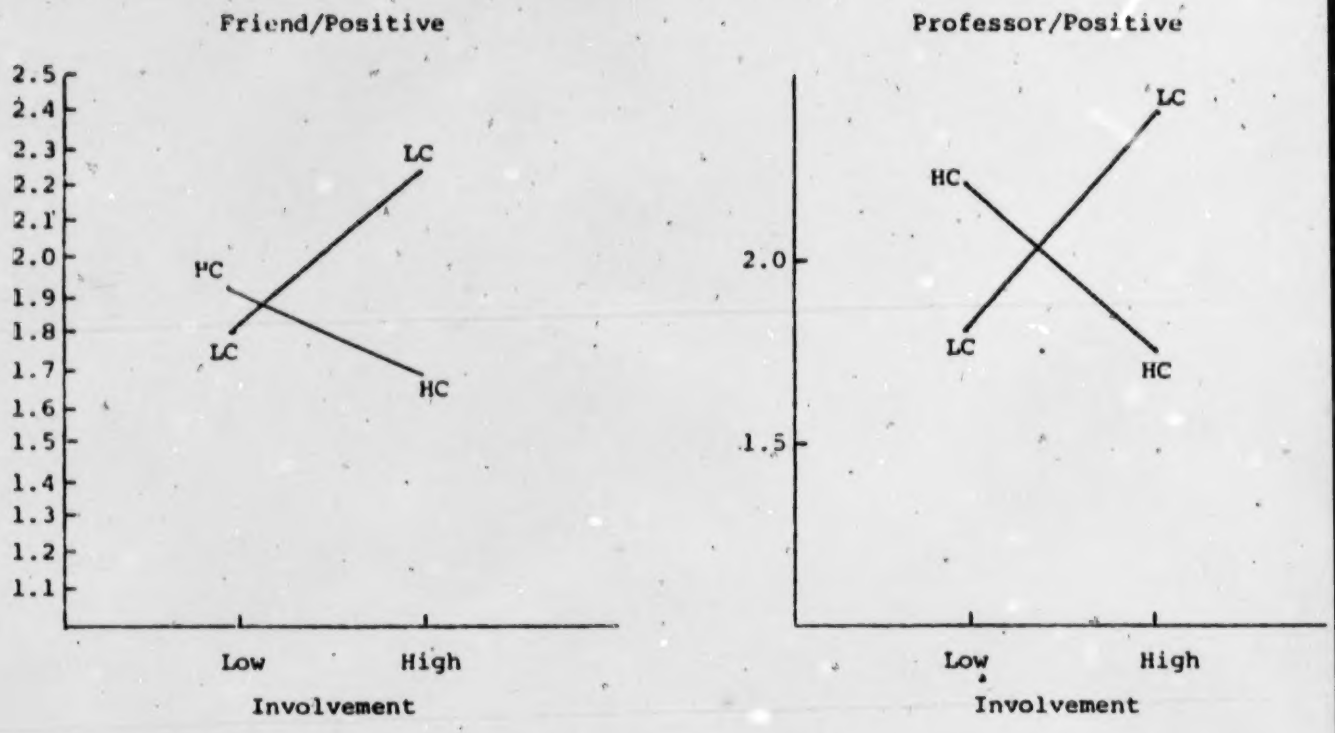
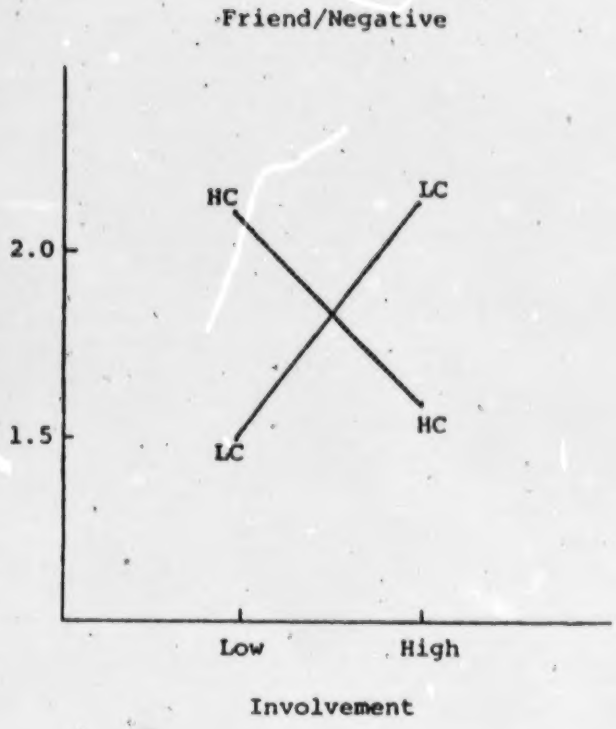


Figure 1b. The Difference in Non-Immediacy Scores Between High and Low CO Scores in Items

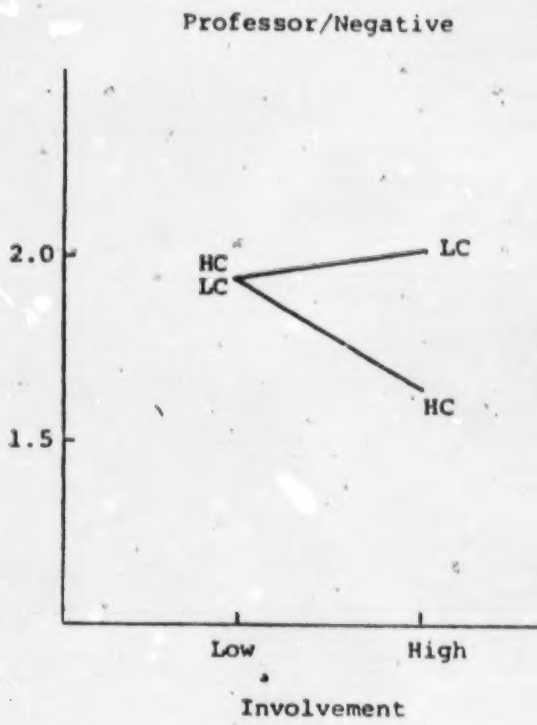


Key: HC = High controversiality
LC = Low controversiality

Figure 2 Adjusted Cell Means Graphed by Situation



(C)



(D)

Figure 2 (continued)